

The Civic Green

Rechargeable Batteries



What's on your Christmas list? A digital camera for Mom, a flashlight for Dad, a Wii system for the kids? These things all have something in common - they require batteries. Why buy single-use batteries that waste money and resources when you can buy rechargeable batteries? Although the initial cost of rechargeable batteries is a bit higher than the cost of single-use batteries, they can be used over and over again which will save you money in the long run. Check out the Consumer tab at: www.calrecycle.ca.gov/ to learn all about choosing and using the proper rechargeable batteries. Also, don't forget to properly dispose of all spent batteries. In Morgan Hill, batteries may be recycled at the curb in a zippered plastic bag or will be accepted by Booksmart, Radio Shack or Johnson Lumber for recycling. Be a green Santa this year - add rechargeable batteries and a charger to your gift list!



A Guide to Green Holiday Giving



Holidays are a time of family, food and shopping in America. The last few months of the year are always filled with worries of finding and affording gifts for all of our loved ones. The high credit card bills put a strain on our wallets, while the excess purchases are a stress on our environment. And let's face it, we add this extra pressure to find the perfect gift just to buy our near-and-dears something that they might not even need. Spare your mind and your environment this season with green holiday giving!

The key to environmentally friendly holiday giving is embracing a minimal waste mindset. With all the wrapping paper, plastic wrapped toys and Christmas cards that are exchanged throughout the season, imagine the amount of waste that goes into the landfills by the end of December. Challenge your inner eco-friendly self and think about giving minimal waste gifts. It's not as hard as you think!

Unleash your creative side. Personal, handmade gifts are always cherished and tend to eliminate the

excessive packaging of store bought items. A loaf of pumpkin bread, homemade tea blends, a mixed CD, a hand-crafted and painted ceramic piece, a handmade blanket...the possibilities are endless!

Offer your time. Plan a date with someone: going on a hike together, sharing a meal, volunteering at a soup kitchen - what better gift to give than your time?

Donate to a cause. Give money to a cause or charity that you think your gift recipient would like. Is your sister a birdwatcher? Donate to the well known National Audubon Society. Got an uncle who is an elementary school teacher? Donate to Greg Mortenson's Pennies for Peace program to help build a school in Pakistan or Afghanistan. You can look for reputable charities on the internet for more ideas or consider donating to one of our deserving local organizations.

Give eco-friendly products. I was the recent recipient of an e-certificate to the online store reuseit.com from a cool, environmentally conscious aunt. The online store has hundreds of reusable items that I had the pleasure of choosing from a fantastic gift for the Earth lover!



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Evangelist

Just this week, I received three calls from residents who still hadn't signed up for RecycleBank. That makes me wonder how many more still aren't taking advantage of this great new program. I asked each of these callers to go out and look in their recycling carts for the RecycleBank tag and guess what? All of their carts were tagged. That means they've been earning points since July 1st and didn't even know it! Despite our best efforts to educate Morgan Hill residents on the ease and benefits of RecycleBank, there are still many who haven't activated their accounts. You can help by spreading the word. Talk to your Morgan Hill friends, neighbors and co-workers and let them know how easy it is to earn rewards just by recycling. Have them look inside their brown cart for the white RecycleBank tag. If they don't have one, they can visit the Development Services Center at 17575 Peak Ave. or BookSmart at 80 E. Second St. to pick one up. Next, they'll need to call RecycleBank at 888-727-2978 to activate their account. That's it - it's so easy! Let's work together and get everyone recycling *and* earning more!

And don't forget—after you've found that perfect little gift, consider alternative gift wrap. Wrapping a sweater in a smartly tied scarf, using a cool reusable cloth bag or giving the newspaper's Sunday comic section another life are ways to minimize the waste associated with traditional gift wrap. Keep an environmental mindset when gifting this season. Morgan Hill most likely will not be having a white Christmas, but we can definitely have a green one!

Christmas Light and Tree Alternatives



Decorating for Christmas can be a difficult task when you're trying to keep a green mindset, but don't fear, lights and trees, two of our favorite Christmas traditions, have environmentally friendly options too! When it comes to putting up lights, use LEDs this year. LEDs (light emitting diodes) use far less energy than their incandescent counterparts. LEDs only use .04 watts per bulb whereas incandescent bulbs can use anywhere from .4 to 10 watts per bulb. Using LEDs could save you up to 80% of your holiday energy costs. It also doesn't hurt that they last for roughly 20 years and that the rest of the strand will work if one light is broken—no more searching for that one

broken bulb! Some varieties of LED Christmas lights are a bit more costly than the regular incandescent bulbs, but they will surely pay for themselves with all that energy saving. And don't forget timers to turn off lights when you're sleeping or not at home!



When considering the idea of cutting down waste during the holidays, the tree is another thing to think about. Granted, cut Christmas trees can later be down-cycled into wood

chips for future gardens, but why kill a tree if you don't have to? Fake trees aren't the answer as many of them are often made of toxins such as PVC, plastics and metals that will never decompose in the landfill. Trucking a cut tree from hundreds of miles away only to be disposed of after the holidays is a huge waste of resources. So what's the answer? Living trees! Whether you decorate an existing tree outside or rent a tree for a month, support living trees. Renting a living, potted tree for the Christmas season to put inside your house is the latest trend and a great way to prevent more holiday waste. Check out www.rentxmastree.com/, a new, local company that rents trees for the holiday season.

Have a Happy and Waste-Free Holiday!

This Month's Green Living Tip:

Green Thanksgiving Tips

Don't toss out your eco-friendly lifestyle just because the holiday season has arrived! Use these tips to green up your Thanksgiving festivities. Start by serving locally grown, organic food. Buying local foods reduces the miles traveled from farm to table and it almost always means better tasting and healthier food. Don't buy decorations-make your own! Take a hike and find tree branches, bush stems loaded with berries, flowers



whose seed heads have dried on the stem and flowering grasses to fill tall vases. Turn your thermostat down 3-5 degrees. If all your holiday cooking doesn't heat up your house, your guests will. Send guests home with leftovers in reusable containers rather than wrapped in plastic or aluminum foil. You can even ask them to bring their own containers for leftovers. These tips will reduce your impact on the environment - something everyone can be thankful for!



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